





OF

# HON. GUSTAVUS A. HENRY,

OF TENNESSEE,

*In the Senate of the Confederate States, November 29, 1864.*

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The question being on the joint resolution introduced by him in the Senate, defining the position of the Confederate States, and declaring the determination of the Congress and the people thereof to prosecute the war till their independence is acknowledged—

Mr. HENRY said : .

*Mr. President*, I rise to address the Senate on the momentous questions involved in the resolutions which have just been reported to the Senate, with more than ordinary sensibility. The field presented for discussion is so wide, that I fear, were I to occupy it fully, I might consume more of the valuable time of the Senate than would be appropriate; and yet, if I attempt to contract my remarks into too narrow a limit, I will rob the resolutions of much of their interest, and render the discussion of them stale and unprofitable. I will, therefore, be obliged to the Senate for its charitable indulgence while I give my views, in my own way, on all the topics I may see proper to discuss; promising the Senate to strike the golden medium, if I can, which lies between the extremes of undue expansion on the one hand and of contraction on the other. Sir, I feel it will be good for us to-day, and a useful occupation of our time, to recur to first principles, and to examine well the ground on which we stand, that the judgment of mankind, which we invoke on our conduct, may be properly enlightened before it is pronounced.

In 1776, the American Revolution dawned upon the world, and the people of the thirteen colonies, then British subjects, the common ancestors of the parties to the present conflict of arms, in Congress assembled, proclaimed to the world the Declaration of American Independence, in which these great political truths, never before announced with such solemnity, were submitted to the candid judgment of mankind—among others, that all men “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.”

To establish these great principles, and in earnest of their sincerity, the Adamses and the Hancocks of Massachusetts “pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.” On this declaration the people of Massachusetts and New York, Virginia and South Carolina, indeed, the whole North and the whole South, united in the revolutionary struggle, and, hand in hand, fought and bled in its defence, and finally achieved their independence, in despite of the power of England, then the mistress of the world. This was the language of stern men, not hastily adopted; of unconquerable patriots, who had counted all the cost, and who had deliberately staked life, liberty and property on the great issue—the independence of their country.

On these principles our fathers, more than eighty years ago, though comparatively few in numbers, grappled with the power of Great Britain, and, after seven years of war, in which their country was desolated, and their cities occupied, possessed and sacked by the enemy, finally triumphed. On these same principles we have staked our all, in the war in which we are engaged with the United States; and though our country may be despoiled and ravaged, our cities given to the flames, and nothing be left but the “blackness of ashes” to mark where they stood, we, too, will finally triumph and achieve our independence.

Mr. President, are not these principles as potent now, and as full of magic, as when they were uttered in Independence Hall, in Philadelphia, amid a silence as deep and solemn as that of the grave? The spell they threw over the hearts of men is felt by us now, and we are bound by it still. This was true political doctrine when England was trying to rivet chains upon Massachusetts and New York, Virginia and South Carolina. It is true now. We stand where our fathers stood and in defence of the same rights. The United States occupy the ground of George the Third, and are re-enacting his despotism, obliterating the brightest pages of their own history, and tearing down with their own hands the monuments that were erected by their

ancestors, and cemented with their blood ; and such will everywhere be the verdict of enlightened public opinion upon their conduct.

Mr. President, we are struggling in this war for the right of *self-government*. These few words cover the whole ground, and elucidate the issue we have joined with our enemies. All others are minor considerations and are merged in it. The contest about our domestic institutions, the right of the States to legalize, destroy or perpetuate them, as an attribute of their sovereignty, are all embraced under the general idea, and purely an American one, the right of the people to self-government ; for whatever may be the dogmas of legitimacy and of despotism, under which man, in all ages, has groaned, and been doomed to drink the cup of slavery, *we hold* that governments have no rightful authority over men, except by the consent of the governed.

Sir, I desire to disabuse the public mind of one fatal error into which our enemies have fallen, and which, to some extent, is participated in by a few of the people of the South. This is no "rebellion ;" but such a war as independent sovereignties wage against each other. These States were all equals. Virginia was as free as New York, and in all political respects her equal and her peer. Equals cannot rebel the one against the other. If they disagree, and resort to arms as the arbitrator, it is war, such as writers on the law of nations recognize among independent nations. The people of the old thirteen colonies were British subjects, acknowledged to be so, and dependent on the Crown. When they threw off British authority they were in rebellion against England. Not so with us in this war. We were the subjects of no power, but were ourselves sovereigns, equals in all respects with our enemies ; and they who call us rebels confound all legal distinctions, and show, to say the least of it, that they have not investigated the subject. Here, no one State was dependent upon another, or upon all of them together. The States, after the war with England, received the acknowledgment of their independence *as States*, not as one consolidated nation. They were recognized by England in the treaty of peace, *as States* ; by the name of Georgia, Virginia, New York, and so on, the whole thirteen being called by name. Under the old confederation they had stood for thirteen years as equals, and voted as equals, each State being entitled to one vote. In 1787, when they formed the Constitution of the United States, they met as equal sovereignties. They did not afterwards sink their separate State sovereignty, abolish their State governments, and have one legislature, as in the case of England, Ireland, and Scotland. No, sir. They maintained their State sovereignty, in opposition to centralism, as being the great enemy of liberty in free States, which would swallow them in the whirlpool of consolidation, but for the spirit of local self-governments, always the life-blood of freedom.

The States never surrendered their independent sovereignty, and when the Constitution was on its passage through the convention that formed it, they unanimously rejected a proposition to dele-

gate to the General Government the power to coerce a State. The proposition was distinctly made and *unanimously rejected*!

This historical fact takes from the United States the last pretence of a constitutional right to coerce, by military power, a State, or any number of them, if they see proper to throw off the government of the United States, and institute a new government, which would be more likely to effect their safety and happiness. Even Alexander Hamilton, who was supposed to be the advocate of unlimited power in the government, declared that a proposition to coerce such a State as New York or Virginia, with such a population as they would have in fifty years, was the maddest project that could be devised. Mr. Madison declared that it would be to confer despotic power on the Government, and that it would convert our free institutions into a despotism. While the States exercised military power to establish their independence, and delegated to Congress the power to declare war, they did not intend to organize a government with a view to the subjugation of the sovereign States which created it. On the contrary, they *unanimously refused* to delegate such despotic power to the government.

Nor is this, sir, a civil war. That is, a war between the people of the same State, such as prevailed in England between the houses of York and Lancaster, when contending factions rent the vitals of the State. This is no such war. It stands on the broad ground of a war between sovereign and independent States, precisely such as has often prevailed between France and England.

Mr. President, it is a source of pure and Christian consolation to the people of the South, that they did not rush blindly into this war. No, sir; we flew to arms only after we had exhausted every means of peace and reconciliation. Never did a people more earnestly implore and supplicate their rulers to beware how they drove them to the necessity of defending their rights by an appeal to arms. We implored them by the ties of a common kindred, and in the name of a common God, to abstain from the injuries and insults they were habitually inflicting upon us, and from the usurpation of powers not delegated in the Constitution, which foreshadowed the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these States. They were deaf to our appeals. In vain did we invoke a peace congress to step in between us and them, and, like the daysman, lay its hand upon the one and the other, and command the peace. The Hon. John Tyler, from Virginia, who had "sounded all the depths and shoals of honor," and who had been President of the whole United States in their purer and better days—the venerable Judge Ruffin, of North Carolina, who had for so many years presided with such dignity and intelligence in the Supreme Court of that State, and had shed such lustre on American jurisprudence; as remarkable for the purity of his character as for the power and clearness of his logic—the pure-minded and gifted Judge Caruthers, of Tennessee, who had held nearly every post of honor in his native State, and who is now her Chief Magistrate elect; and many others of equal

patriotism, made their pilgrimage to Washington to stay the coming strife before the first blow was struck—toiled in vain to bring about an honorable adjustment, and were at last forced to go home in despair of the Republic, and to tell their people that all hope of saving it was gone !

It was not until all these efforts were made and proved to be unavailing ; not until the last star of hope that blazed on the political horizon had gone down in blood, and Lincoln had made his proclamation for seventy-five thousand men to subjugate these States, that the people began to prepare for war. When that dreadful alternative, war or subjugation, was presented to them, the masses everywhere, as if by instinct, before the politicians were ready for it, or had fully made up their minds what they would do, had detected the lurking purposes of the tyrant, sounded the tocsin and were panting for the conflict. The politicians, who, in ordinary cases, lead the people, were led, in this great ground-swell of popular indignation, by them. It was more emphatically a movement of the people than any I have ever observed since I have been in public life. It is emphatically *the people's war*.

Mr. President, we have now maintained this unequal contest for nearly four years, and invoke the judgment of the world whether or not we have established our capacity for self-government, and our ability to resist the power of the enemy to subjugate us.

We have a Government regularly organized under a written constitution, with Executive, Legislative and Judicial departments ; all the functions of a constitutional government in full and successful operation.

If the Governments of Europe have not seen fit to recognize us as a free and independent Power and welcome us into the family of nations, it is their fault, not ours.

The United States were recognized by France in less than two years after their declaration of independence ; and the United States, in a much shorter period than that for which we have maintained our separate nationality, recognized the South American Republics and the Republic of Mexico, after they asserted their independence of the Governments which they respectively overthrew.

We need but look to the present and the past, to settle the question of our ability to resist the power of the enemy. Less than four years ago we were without an army and navy. Our enemy took possession of both, and turned them against us. The wealth of the country was at the North ; and the pernicious system of legislation pursued so long and so persistingly to our prejudice and to the aggrandizement of the North, had concentrated there nearly all the public works and manufacturing power of the whole country. We had neither heavy ordnance nor small arms ; manufactured neither powder nor ball ; not even percussion caps. But see the progress we have made, and how we have developed our resources. We are now making more than ten thousand pounds of powder per day at one of our mills. Our army is well equipped with all the implements of warfare. We are able to

keep an army of four hundred thousand soldiers in the field. We have met the enemy in a hundred battles, and have baffled and defeated his armies in conflicts without number on the land, and our little navy has nearly driven his commerce from the seas. We have struck the world with astonishment at the power we have exhibited, while the gaze of all Europe is fixed in admiration of the gallantry of our soldiers. If we consider our small and meagre resources at the beginning, and the material strength we wield now, we are ourselves astonished at the progress we have made in the art of war and the science of government. The most potent Power on earth has gained no decided advantage over us; and we can now say to the enemy, after having maintained the struggle for nearly four years, with so much gallantry and success, without being misunderstood, even by him, that we are sincerely desirous of peace, and that the Confederate States are ready and willing to open negotiations to that end, on the basis of their separate independence, positively repudiating all idea of a reunion with them, or of a reconstruction of the Union through the instrumentality of a convention of all the States.

If we were to agree to go into a convention of the States, we would be bound, on honor, to abide its decision. They outnumber us two to one, and, of course, would have us in their power. We would deliver ourselves over to them, bound hand and foot, to receive the scourge which their malice would inflict, and which our fatuity and folly would richly merit. No, sir; let our enemy know, and let the world bear witness, we strike for independence and will be satisfied with nothing else. Reunion with the United States would result in bondage to us. The bondage under which Ireland groans—the tyranny which England has, for so many years, inflicted upon that down-trodden people, would be visited upon us by our enemies. Death would be infinitely preferable to such a condition. A brave and gallant people may well afford to die freemen, but they cannot afford to live slaves. Before such disgrace and calamity, as would assuredly follow reunion with the United States, shall befall us, I pray God that the earth may open under our feet and bury every man, woman and child in the whole Confederacy in one undistinguished grave! Yes, sir; we will court death in any shape—on the battlefield, in the earthquake's dreadful shock, or ocean's storm—before we will submit to any terms of reunion with them.

Listen, sir, to a short recital from revolutionary history: In 1778, Lord North introduced into the British Parliament his famous conciliatory bills. The first two retracted the claim of power in Parliament to tax the colonies, and the third provided for the appointment of commissioners, who should be duly authorized to treat, and agree to a pacification on that basis. The whole scheme, however, proceeded on the assumption that the American States were to return to their colonial dependence on the British Crown. These bills were sent to America and to General Washington, who laid them before Congress. That body, on the 22d April, 1778, promptly and unani-

mously resolved, that they would hold no conference or treaty with any commissioners who were appointed and sent to America, on the part of Great Britain, unless they should, as a preliminary, either withdraw their armies, or acknowledge in positive and express terms the independence of America. It is worthy remark, that this bold language of our fathers was used when Congress was ignorant of the conclusion of treaties with France, and when they thought they would have to measure strength with England unaided by any other power. This, Mr. President, is the defiant language we should hold to the enemy. Here is an example worthy of our imitation, and I commend it to all who suffer themselves to think, for one moment, of reunion with the enemy.

Reunion with them? No, sir; never! There is a great gulf that rolls between us. It is a gulf of blood, without a shore and without a bottom, and is as impassable as that which separates Dives from Lazarus. The mute objects of nature; our desecrated churches and altars; our sweet valleys drenched in blood and charred by fire, forbid it. The dead would cry out against it from their gory beds. The blood of my own sons, yet unavenged, cries to Heaven from the ground for vengeance. The thousands who are sleeping red in their graves would awake and utter their solemn protest. Stonewall Jackson, Polk, Stuart, Rodes, Morgan, Preston Smith, and the thousands over whose remains a monument to the unknown dead shall be raised, are speaking in tones of thunder against it; and can it be the *living* only will be dumb? Sir, those who have died in this war are not dead to us.

"E'en in their ashes live their wonted fires."

They are, in the light of their example, more valuable than the living. Their spirits walk abroad, and stir the hearts of living men to do or die in the cause of liberty. We cherish their memory. Weeping virgins and devoted mothers shall kneel around their tombs, and bedew with their tears the graves where they sleep. Poetry shall embalm their memory, and minstrelsy perpetuate their fame forever. We give in charge their names to the sweet lyre. The historic muse, proud of her treasure, shall march with it down to the latest times, and sculpture, in her turn, shall give bond in stone and ever during brass to guard them and immortalize her trust! The soldiers who have died in this war are not only enshrined in the innermost core of our hearts, but, to the mind's eye, are ever in our sight.

"On fame's eternal camping ground,  
Their silent tents are spread;  
And glory guards with solemn round  
The bivouac of the dead."

Sir, this is a fit and appropriate time to proclaim again our unalterable determination to be free. If the people of the United States, by re-electing their present Chief Magistrate, who began this war, and who has perpetrated, in its prosecution, acts of unparalleled atro-



city, mean to give us notice that they will prosecute it still further—mean to tender us four years more of war or reunion with them—we accept the notice. We accept their gage of battle, and defy them to the contest. They may be stronger than we; but a people who are determined to be free never stop to count the numbers of those who would rob them of the priceless boon. Besides, sir, the battle is not to the strong. There is a just God who will fight our battles for us. Our strength is in Him and we will not fear, “though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.”

If it be the purpose of the enemy to prolong the war, let us begin anew to prepare for it. When mast after mast on Paul Jones' vessel was carried away by the cannon balls of the enemy, till not one was left standing, and that enemy had boarded his vessel, and he was called upon to surrender, he heroically shouted aloud, “I will never surrender; I am just getting ready to fight.” Let us emulate the example of that stout-hearted sailor. The Government should organize its strength, and, especially, execute our laws. The failure to do so stamps weakness on all our efforts to fill the army. Let us prepare in earnest for the defence of our country, and give cordially every power to the Government that is necessary to establish our independence. That being done, we need have no fear about our personal rights. Who will dare to assail them? No public man could maintain his place who would have the temerity to attempt it. The real danger does not lie in that direction. The great difficulty is, first, to establish our independence. Then every other temporal good shall be given unto us. We have men enough, who have never been in the service, to drive the enemy before us. Let us bring them into the field, and give them an opportunity to take part in this great war. It were cruel to them and to their children to deny them the privilege. If we could bring back to the service all able-bodied men who are absent, from any cause, we would reanimate our noble armies, and enable them to achieve fresh victories. Sir, this is the great point to which we ought to direct attention. Fill up the army! It is the best peace measure after all. Fill up the army—it is the great scheme of finance that will regulate our currency. Fill up the army—it will achieve our independence!

There was but one moment that a doubt ever hung on my mind as to the final result of this war, and that doubt was soon dispelled by the noble conduct of our army. When the first terms of service of our volunteers was about to expire, the Congress felt it was necessary to conscribe them for two years longer. The necessity was imperious, and we were compelled to meet it. We knew all of our soldiers wanted to go home to see their families; but we also knew to disband the veteran troops then in the field was to give up the contest. We were not unconscious the step we were about to take was a perilous one; but the public safety demanded it. We passed the law, and without a murmur our noble soldiers stood to their arms. No com-

plaint was heard anywhere except among the politicians and those who had never been in the service.

When two years more of war had rolled round, and the second term of the soldiers was about to expire—when the Congress had the subject under painful consideration, we were all relieved by glad tidings that came from the army. The soldiers, anticipating the act of Congress, had volunteered, or re-enlisted for the war. From that moment I felt all was safe, if we would do *our* duty.

I had the honor, sir, to offer the first resolution of thanks to the soldiers for their heroic sacrifice of ease, and all the joys of home, to the good of their country. The example, which all the army speedily followed, first came from my own noble Tennessee, thus reasserting and re-establishing the proud claim of Tennessee of being the “Volunteer State;” and I lifted my heart in thanks and praise to God that I had the honor, in part, to represent here in the Senate such a people!

Sir, we are engaged in the prosecution of a mighty war. It has swelled and grown beyond the dimensions anybody gave to it at the beginning. We have to make up our minds to fight it out unaided, and we will “conquer or perish more proudly alone.” We have determined to suffer and endure, and we feel that suffering and endurance but purify our hearts, and enable us to make sacrifices that are worthy of the cause in which we are engaged. The spirit of patriotism is found in its purest state where the scourge of the oppressor has been most keenly felt. It is then unadulterated, and has been refined of its dross, as silver by fire. “The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church,” and the plant of patriotism takes root and flourishes best in the soil that has been fertilized by the blood of our sons, and fallowed with the ploughshare of despotism. We may, sometimes, under the hope of saving our property, temporize with the enemy, and even listen to degrading terms of reconciliation; but if that property is destroyed in our sight, our families insulted and driven from their homes, and those homes themselves given to the flames, the remains of them reminding us of the vandalism of the foe, then we begin to burn with a patriot’s fire, and are willing to give up all earthly treasures, as being of no value in comparison with the liberty of the country. Many a man is a good patriot without being burnt out, but he is certain to be so afterwards. It is an infallible remedy for all who are deficient in love of country, or who “lack gall to make oppression bitter.” No man has any idea how cheerfully the people of the desolated districts of Tennessee have given up all they had, and how strong is the hope of the future which animates them. Their faith in final success is stronger than the faith of the people where the invader has never been. Thousands of my constituents, who have heretofore enjoyed all the luxuries that wealth could purchase, are now eating the bitter bread of exile, or are compelled, by manual labor, to earn the bread they eat; but they murmur not, neither do they complain; seeming to realize the truth of Holy Writ, that the “rest of the laboring man is sweet.” They submit to the

change of the condition in which they are placed without a sigh. No groan breaks from the heart, however loaded it may be by a sense of degradation or of wrong. They say, "we do not care for the loss of our property, but give us, oh, give us independence to our country, and freedom from Yankee thralldom." They have felt his contaminating touch; they have felt the degradation that accompanies his supremacy; and they fear his rule as the dying sinner fears the tortures of the damned, and pray to be delivered from it as the dying Christian prays to be delivered from the bondage of hell. Oh, sir, it is enough to break one's heart to listen to the recital of their wrongs. Not content with burning mills, dwelling-houses and factories, the enemy have committed enormities, at the very name of which my heart sickens, and which are enough to shock high heaven and invoke its thunders. A refugee from my own State, recently out, fell in with a neighbor boy who had been in the service here in Virginia since General Lee's first campaign in the mountains. He had been with him in all his great battles; from Petersburg, along the winding Chickahominy, the heroic fields at Manassas, and away to Antietam and Gettysburg, wherever his banner floated or his falchion flashed, and, by the mercy of God, was preserved uninjured. The meeting of the two friends was touching beyond anything I have ever seen in fiction. The young soldier said to him: "Tell me quickly the news from home. The old man, my father, is he alive? is he well? My mother, my sister, how are they?" "Oh, sir, the news is too bad to tell. The homestead is in ruins; your aged father was murdered by the vandals on his own heath-stone; your mother fell broken-hearted on his lifeless corpse; and your sister—oh, I cannot tell what has happened to her—she is now a wandering maniac!" Can we have a reunion with such monsters in human shape? *Forbid it, Almighty God!*

The people of Tennessee have felt the yoke of the oppressor. They know how galling it is to the neck. They have been made to drink the cup of slavery to the dregs, and they know how bitter is the draught. They have been ground under the heel of petty tyrants, and they know what it is to have the iron enter their souls. They hate their oppressors with a concentrated hate which can expire only with their lives. The Jews when they were carried away into captivity in Babylon, never looked more anxiously for deliverance than they are looking even now for the Confederate army to enter the State, and strike from their limbs their galling chains. They are now, sir, standing on tiptoe, straining their eyes to catch the first glimpse of the Confederate flag as it floats out upon the wild winds free on yonder hill, and long for its coming as the hunted hart pants for the water brook.

I confidently predict, if our army enters the State and maintains its position there for three months, that its numbers will be doubled. From every hill and valley our oppressed people will come to our banner as the "leaves come when forests are rended." It is my nightly prayer that my life may be spared till I witness the deliverance

of my noble State and my oppressed people. Tennessee! Oh, may I be allowed to

“Raise my exultant head and see  
Thy hills, thy dales, thy people free!  
That glance of bliss is all I crave  
Between my labors and my grave!”

I further predict, Mr. President, if our army goes into Kentucky and stays there three months, and gives to that people any assurance that we will hold it and stand by them—if they will unite their fortunes with us, and make common cause in this great struggle for liberty—the last that ever will be made if we fail; for if the light of liberty is extinguished here the gloom of despotism will be unbroken all over the world; put out that light and where is the Promethean spark that can that light relume—if, I say, we will give the people of Kentucky an assurance that we will stand by them, and not, by coming speedily away, hand them over to the ravenous wolves who will thirst for their blood, thousands will join our army, and re-enact the scenes of the “dark and bloody ground,” and add new lustre to this, the most memorable struggle in the annals of time, in which Kentucky has not as yet, as a State, participated. I do not overestimate it when I predict that fifty thousand as gallant men as ever shouldered a musket or hung a sabre to the thigh, will be added as fresh recruits to our army from Kentucky and Tennessee. Sir, they constitute the best recruiting grounds now in America. The people of both States are now ripe for action, and will come to the rescue of our gallant army with alacrity.

Mr. President, let us be united; let us work together in this common cause, no matter at what cost of blood and treasure; for it is worthy of the sacrifice. Let not the future historian record of us: here was a nation that bravely spurned “villian bonds and despot sway,” and never was conquered by its enemies *till from itself it fell*. If there had been no division in North Carolina and Tennessee, we could have sent to the field an army of 400,000 men. The mother and the daughter, locking their shields together, could have passed through the land conquering and to conquer.

It is not too late yet. If all discord were silenced, and the people of the two States, soldiers and politicians, the men at home and the men in the army, could act together as one people, animated by one purpose, and emulous only to excel each other in the race of glory, this war would soon have an end; indeed, under such a condition of things it never would have had a beginning. It is kept alive by discord now. Is it not *mortifying*, in a struggle like this, when all hearts should be united in a common effort, that any discordant voices should be raised in *carping criticism* against the Government, its administration and its President? It is surely task enough for his worn energies to watch the public enemy, without being forced to endure the distrustful assaults of friends at home. From the bottom of my heart he has my sympathy in the midst of the great and multi-

plied trials by which he is surrounded; trials that are with him every day and hour, and which haunt his pillow at night, driving sleep from his eye-lids while others are in calm repose.

Is it fair, or generous, or patriotic, that his opponents should select the darkest hour of gloom that hangs over the country—a gloom which a united voice and effort in this capital would drive away in twenty-four hours—to assail his character and mar his plans? As though the pilot who stands at the helm in the hour of danger did not have enough to do to watch the storm that is beating mercilessly on his vessel, to hold its head steady to the wind and shun the rocks against which it could not be driven and live, without being harrassed by the railing and the mutiny of the crew! Thank God, those who assail him cannot shake him in his steady march in the path of duty; nor can they shake the confidence of the country in him! Though their words of censure may fall harmlessly at his feet, they are caught up by the spies who crawl about the capital and meet us in our private and public walks, and become winged messengers to the enemy, giving exaggerated accounts of whatever disaffection may prevail here, and encouragement to the enemy to persevere against us, under the hope that domestic discord may unbar the gates they have not been able to force, and weaken the fortress which has hitherto been impregnable to their assaults, and from which their columns have been hurled back in confusion, bleeding and broken. Sir, this habit of assailing the President and the administration is, in my opinion, a habit more honored in the breach than the observance. It does incalculable injury, and, though it is not so intended, gives aid and comfort to the enemy. It is gratifying that no such habit prevails in the Senate. But notwithstanding all the grumblings and mutterings of disappointed malcontents elsewhere, he is firmly fixed in the hearts of the people; aye, sir, in their heart of hearts. They put their trust in him, and lean on him while this storm of war is raging over the land as he leans on Heaven for support.

May he live to bring the vessel safely into port, amid the acclamations of all on board and the shouts and loud huzzas of all on the shore. Doubtless he has committed errors, and made grave mistakes in his judgments of men and measures; for everybody and every thing was untried and had to be tested by experience. Did anybody ever expect any thing else? for is he not human, and is it not human to err? Our own Washington, the purest and greatest of human beings, was not exempt from human frailty. The people have given their confidence to the President of the Confederate States, because they believe he is wise, patriotic and brave; and, so far as I know, he has done nothing to forfeit their confidence, but a great deal to increase it. The consequence is, they who assail him do not injure him, but themselves, and, it may be, their country. Here, sir, is the rub. The country is the chief sufferer. The shafts that are aimed at him fly wide of the mark, passing him harmlessly; but are found quivering in the heart of our bleeding country.

They who throw themselves in the way of a united and vigorous prosecution of this war, from any unjust suspicion of the President, or from any other cause, will repent it in sackcloth and ashes. "Who-soever falls on this rock shall be broken; and on whomsoever it falls, he shall be ground to powder." In my opinion, we ought to give him a cordial support in all his efforts to save the country; not blindly, but patriotically, for the sake of the country. It were better, it seems to me, to direct our thunders against the enemy who is trying to subjugate us, rather than pour out our invectives on his head whom the people have chosen as the pilot to conduct us through the storm.

It shall be some consolation to me, Mr. President, when that storm is over, and our vessel of State is riding on tranquil seas, and "walking the water like a thing of life," with our Confederate flag flying from its mast head, recognized by all nations, and honored and respected in every port around the globe; when peace and prosperity shall return to bless the land; when our fields shall again smile with the rich productions of agriculture, and the white-winged birds of our commerce shall flock to every port, carrying our great staples to other lands, and bringing back the luxuries and wealth of other nations to pour them into our lap; it shall be some consolation to me then, if I have not upheld the arms of the commander and stimulated the hearts of the crew in a manner commensurate with my great ambition to serve the country honestly and to serve it well, that I have at least done nothing to paralyze the one or the other; but, according to the best of my poor ability, done all I could to sustain the cause, to advance our standard, to brace and strengthen, in the field or in the cabinet, all who honestly try to serve the country and to establish its independence forever.



